

A quiet night for Y2K revelers at Western

They came out in force, ready to tackle any Y2K-related problems as the millennium made its debut. But after three years of preparations, the closest thing to a Y2K glitch encountered by Western employees was a toilet that wouldn't flush.

From as early as 4:30 a.m. on New Year's Eve, employees around Western began reporting to duty to ensure Western was prepared for any system disturbances or security or facility-related snafus. But as the day wore on and as 1999 rolled over into 2000, employees pleasantly discovered that

Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition systems didn't mis-operate; heat ventilation and air conditioning systems operated without problems; and commercial phones and e-mail worked just fine. All the hard work fixing potential Y2K problems had paid off!

In the Upper Great Plains Region, more than 230 extra folks were on hand to assist with the rollover despite a flu outbreak among many employees at the Watertown Operations Office. From facility managers and communications technicians to computer specialists, engineers and dispatchers, employees stayed busy monitoring the region and updating the Western Systems Coordinating Council or Mid-Continent Area Power Pool on Western's system.

"It was so uneventful," said **Earl Cass**, Assistant Director of the System Reliability and Transmission Control Division and Y2K rollover coordinator. "I wish something had

happened because the System Operators had been trained and were prepared for almost anything. They were like athletes prepared for a race and then told to go home without running."

To make the best of working on New Year's Eve, employees in the Operations Center invited their spouses and children to help them celebrate. "At midnight, we were all in the control room with noisemakers and non-alcoholic champagne to ring in the new year," Cass said.

In the Rocky Mountain Region, a few minor problems kept the 40 extra linemen, electricians, dispatchers, facility managers and communication folks awake. "It was pretty quiet most of the time. The only thing that woke us up was when we lost some data communication from Public Service Company. It was on their end, though, and nothing that would jeopardize the power system. It was quickly fixed," said **Roger Armstrong**, a computer specialist and Y2K Transition Team member.

RMR employees stayed until 1:30 a.m. to be sure the rollover went smoothly in California. "We left when we knew they would be all right—we never heard any giant sucking sound coming from the West, pulling away our power," joked Armstrong.

At the CSO, eight employees from the Y2K team and other CSO offices, plus Administrator **Mike Hacskaylo** were on hand to ensure a smooth transition.

They monitored Y2K rollovers around the world and kept a conference call bridge open for the regions to communicate with one another about their systems. But like the rest of Western, the night passed without a hitch. They were so confident about the rollover that they had non-alcoholic champagne already poured before the stroke of midnight.

In the Desert Southwest, about 90 people were manning substations or working

in the control center to ensure a smooth transition into 2000. Meter and relay craft personnel, communication technicians and engineers, computer engineers and others were standing by, waiting for any possible SCADA system or equipment-related problems. But like the rest of the world, the night passed quietly. **Tyler Carlson**, DSW regional manager, expressed his confidence by thanking all involved for a job well done at 11:30 p.m., especially after seeing that "the rest of the country was rolling over just fine," said **Roy Tinsley**, a computer specialist and Y2K Transition Team member.

Tinsley was relieved the rollover occurred without a hitch until he made a pit stop on his way out the door at 2:15 a.m. In the men's restroom, he noticed the toilet's automatic flushing function wasn't operating properly. "I walked away and it wouldn't flush. I called **Bob Evans** (DSW's Rollover Coordinator) on the cell phone and said, 'Bob, we might finally have found a bona fide Y2K glitch.' He was in stitches when I told him, but excited over the prospect." It turns out the problem was not related to Y2K, but to the black Y2K Transition Team T-shirt Tinsley was wearing, which the sensor didn't pick up.

In the last region to experience the rollover—Sierra Nevada—dispatchers flicked the lights on and off to keep the night from being too uneventful. "The dispatchers played with the lights, but we knew what they were up to," said SNR Y2K Project Manager **Jasen Strutt**. Despite having 35 extra people on hand, "not a darn thing happened," he said. "Because we were the last region to roll through, it was a non-event by the time it got to us."

That nothing noteworthy happened was due to the monumental planning nationwide, noted Strutt. "Many of the things we feared and planned against, we thankfully avoided. A tremendous amount of effort was needed to raise Y2K awareness and to prepare our systems. It's too early to state Y2K has been 'beaten,' but it has been cut down to size."

Don Nord, Western's Y2K project manager, was grateful nothing significant materialized. "It was exactly the result we'd been working toward, even though it did make New Year's Eve seem a bit anti-climatic," said Nord. "All the planning, testing and upgrading we did during the past three years was worth it."

Hacskaylo thanked all Western employees who worked long and hard to identify and fix any Y2K-related issues. "This was a Herculean effort and we succeeded," he said.



Upper Left, SNR Dispatcher **Pete Miller** works the desk getting ready for the Y2K rollover. Left, Dispatchers **Larry Odell**, front left, **Pete Miller**, front right, and the rest of the SNR Y2K crew strike a victory pose as the digital clock rolls over to 0:00 at midnight. Above, DSW Dispatcher **Dan DeGracie** discusses Western's Y2K readiness with Arizona Governor Jane D. Hull at Arizona Y2K Operations Center.